



All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

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AWAM's Statement on Women's Political Participation

It is important that women are seen in decision making and political positions. The appointment of women in such positions is a positive first step towards ensuring that more women participate in the political scene. Having more women in such positions also encourages young women and girls that their place in the public and political scene is a norm. AWAM supports women leaders that have a well-known human rights track record, and who demonstrate their integrity and commitment to the interests of the rakyat. Any measures towards encouraging women's political participation should not be sporadic but should instead be a concerted effort to ensure that there is a level playing field and meaningful involvement from women.

The reality is that women continue to face discrimination and marginalisation in various fields including in politics. Statistics indicate that women are still not well represented in politics. According to the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development's 2012 booklet on statistics, only 10.4% of Members of Parliament are women. At the state level, only 8% of state legislative assembly members are women.

Our society is still subject to patriarchal values and is male-dominated and male-centric. At the public and political level, sexist behaviour from members of parliament and leaders must be addressed as such comments create a hostile work environment for women. Despite formally allowing women to participate in politics, societal pressure in Malaysia still actively discourages women from doing so, and this includes attempts to push women away from politics and back to what is believed to be their rightful roles as homemakers.

It is thus imperative that the Malaysian government takes steps in educating the Malaysian society to relax its hold on traditional gender roles. We need to create a more fair and equitable public space for women, allowing women to be the agents of their own destiny rather than being restricted by outdated notions of what men and women can or cannot do. As a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Malaysia needs to step up its efforts to enhance women's participation at the decision making level in both public and private sectors.

Diversity in representation is crucial as it makes for better decision-making and helps build a democracy and a political culture that represents diverse interests and values.